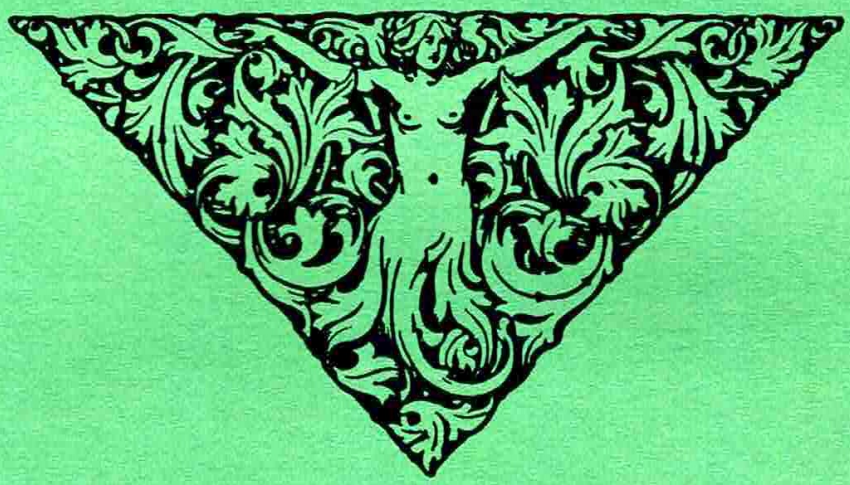
THE RITUAL OF TYL ULENSPIEGL AND LUCIFER THE KING OF SPRING



Thelema Lodge
ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS

Beltane, ANNO IIIXX

THE RITUAL OF TYL ULENSPIEGL AND LUCIFER THE KING OF SPRING

adapted from the Flemish novel Tyl Ulenspiegl
by Charles de Coster (1869)

Thelema Lodge
ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS
P.O. Box 2303, Berkeley, CA 94702

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TYL ULENSPIEGL—*wearing his foolscap*

NELE—*a sweet country maiden, wearing a smock*

KATHELINE—*middle-aged or crone, a wise woman*

GIANT OF WINTER—*icicles in his beard, iron crown*

LUCIFER, THE KING OF SPRING—*wears a crown and red cape*

THE QUEEN—*nude or gowned*

HUNCHBACK DWARFS, MEN OF THE WOODS, EMPERORS OF MINES, FLOWER-MAIDENS, STAR-SPIRITS, WIND GENII, 100,000 GIANT HORRID INSECTS WITH MURDEROUR WEAPONS, SAP BEARERS

NARRATOR

NARRATOR: **The fat of the victims smoked on the stakes. Ulenspiegel, thinking of Claes and Soetkin, wept alone. He went one evening to find Katheline to ask her for a remedy and vengeance. She was alone with Nele, sewing beside the lamp. At the sound he made coming in, Katheline lifted her head heavily like a woman awakened from a deep sleep.**

ULENSPIEGL: **The ashes of Claes beat against my breast. I want to save the land of Flanders. I have asked the great God of Heaven and Earth, but he has made me no answer.**

KATHELINE: **The great God could not hear you; for you must first speak to the spirits of the elemental world, which having both celestial and terrestrial natures, receive the complaints of poor men and transmit them to the angels, who afterwards bear them to the throne.**

ULENSPIEGL: **Help me with my project; I shall repay you in blood, if necessary.**

KATHELINE: **I will help you, if a girl who loves you wishes to take you with her to the Sabbath of the Spirits of Spring, the re-awakening of the sap.**

NELE: **I will take him.**

NARRATOR: **Katheline poured a grey mixture into a crystal tankard which she gave both of them to drink; with this mixture she rubbed their temples, nostrils, the palms of their hands, and their wrists, made them swallow a pinch of white powder and told them to look at each other, so that their souls would be as one.**

Ulenspiegl looked at Nele, and the soft eyes of the young girl lit a great fire within him; then, because of the mixture, he felt as though a thousand crabs were nipping him.

Then they undressed, and they were very lovely thus lit by the lamp, he in his proud strength, she in her sweet grace; but they could not see each other, for they were already as though asleep. Then Katheline placed the arm of Ulenspiegl around Nele's neck and, taking his hand, placed it on the heart of the young girl.

And so they stayed naked, the one lying by the other.

It seemed to both of them that their bodies, in touching, made a soft fire like the sun in the mouth of roses.

They arose, as they told later on, climbed on the window sill, and from there went off into space, and felt the air bearing them, as the sea bears ships.

Then they saw nothing more, neither of the earth where slept poor men, nor of the sky where lately their feet had rolled the clouds. And they set foot upon the Pole.

There they saw, not without fear, a new giant, the giant Winter, with wild hair, seated on bergs against a wall of ice. In pools of water bears and seals moved about him, a noisy troop. With a hoarse voice, he called hail, snow, the cold blasts, the grey clouds, the red and foul-smelling fogs, and the

winds, amoung which blows strongest the biting North wind, and all of them came at once in that deadly place.

Smiling at these disasters, the giant lay on flowers that his hand had withered, on leaves that his breath had dried. Then, leaning over and scratching the earth with his nails and biting it with his teeth, he made a hole to seek out the heart of the earth, devour it and also place the black charcoal where there were shady forests, straw where there was wheat, sand instead of the fruitful earth. But, the heart of the earth being of fire, he did not dare touch it and recoiled affrighted.

He was enthroned as a king, draining his cup of oil, in the midst of all his bears and his seals, and the skeletons of all those whom he had killed on sea, on land, and in the cottages of poor folk. He listened joyfully to the growling of the bears, the barking of the seals, the rattling of the bones of skeletons of men and animals under the claws of vultures and ravens, seeking out a last morsel of flesh, and the noise of icebergs being pushed against each other by the gloomy water.

And the voice of the giant was like the roaring of hurricanes, the noise of winter tempests, and soughing in the chimneys.

ULENSPIEGL: I am cold and afraid.

NELE: He can do nothing against the spirits.

NARRATOR: Suddenly there was a great stir among the animals; the seals hastily re-entered the water; the bears, lowering their ears with fright, growled plaintively; and the ravens, croaking with anguish, flew up and were lost in the clouds.

And now Nele and Ulenspiegl heard the dull sounds of a battering ram against the icy walls which served as a support to the giant Winter. And the wall broke and quivered under the blows of the ram.

But the giant Winter heard nothing and he howled and shouted joyfully, filling and emptying his cup of oil; and he sought out the heart of the earth, to freeze it, but did not dare touch it.

Meanwhile the blows resounded louder and the wall cracked more, and a rain of broken icicles ceaselessly fell about him.

And the bears continued to growl plaintively and the seals complained in the gloomy waters.

The wall fell and there was daybreak in the sky; a man descended, naked and lovely, supporting himself with one hand on a golden axe. And this man was Lucifer, the King of Spring.

When the giant saw him, he threw away his cup of oil and begged not to be killed.

And with the warm breath of the King of Spring, the giant Winter lost all his strength. The King then took chains of diamonds, bound him and attached him to the Pole.

Then, stopping, he called out—but tenderly and lovingly—and from the skies came down a fair woman, naked and beautiful.

QUEEN LUCIFER *(Placing herself beside the King)*: **You are my conqueror, strong man.**

LUCIFER: **If you are hungry, eat; if you are thirsty, drink; if you are afraid, come close to me. I am your male.**

QUEEN LUCIFER: **I am not hungry or thirsty, save for you.**

(The KING cries aloud seven times, terribly.)

NARRATOR: **There was a great noise of thunder and lightning and behind him was formed a dais of suns and stars. And they sat upon and stars. And they sat upon the thrones.**

(The KING and his WIFE, without their noble countenances moving or without making any gesture contrary to their strength or calm majesty, cry out.)

NARRATOR: **At these cries there was an undulating movement in the earth, the hard stone, and the icebergs. And Nele and Ulenspiegl heard a noise such as gigantic birds might make in trying to break the shells of enormous eggs with their beaks.**

And in this great movement of the soil, rising and falling, like the waves of the sea, were shapes like those of eggs.

Suddenly, from everywhere, trees came forth with their dry branches entwined, while their trunks moved and swayed like drunken men. Then they parted, leaving between them a vast empty space. From the agitated soil came forth the genii of the earth; from the depths of the forest, the spirits of the woods; from the neighbouring sea, the genii of the water.

Ulenspiegl and Nele saw there the dwarf guardians of treasures—hunchbacked, splay-footed, hairy, ugly and grimacing; princes of stones; men of the woods living like trees and bearing, in place of mouth and stomach, a bunch of roots on the lower part of their faces, through which they sucked in

their nourishment from the breast of the earth; the emperors of mines, who do not know how to speak, having neither heart nor guts and moving like brilliant automatons. There were dwarfs of flesh and blood, having lizards' tails and paddocks' heads with lanterns on them; at night these dwarfs leap on the shoulders of drunken pedestrians or frightened travellers, then, leaping down again and shaking their lanterns, lead into bogs and holes the poor wretches who think the lanterns are the candles shining from the windows of their homes.

There, also, were flower-maidens, flowers of strength and feminine health, naked and not at all blushing, proud of their beauty, and having only their hair for mantle.

Their eyes shone moistly like mother of pear in water; the flesh of their bodies was firm, white and gilded by the light; from their red half-opened mouths came a breath more fragrent than jasmine.

There are they who wander in the evening in parks and gardens, or in the depths of woods by the shady lanes, amorous and seeking to enjoy some man's soul. As soon as any young boy and girl pass before them, they try to kill the girl, but being unable to do so, they breathe into the dear one's ear, she still withholding herself, a desire for love so that she will finally give herself to the lover; for then the flower-maiden has half the kisses.

Ulenspiegl and Nele also saw, descending from the highest heavens, the protecting spirits of the stars, the genii of the wind, breezes and rain, winged young men who fecundate the earth.

Then from all points of the heavens appeared the birds of souls, the dear swallows. Then they were come, the light seemed more vibrant. Flower-maidens, princes of stones,

emperors of mines, men of the woods, spirits of the water, of fire and of earth, cried out together:

ALL: Light! Sap! Glory to the King of Spring!

NARRATOR: Although the noise of their unanimous clamour was more powerful than the furious sea, than the pealing thunder and the unchained tempest, it sounded like grave music to the ears of Nele and Ulenspiegl, who, motionless and dumb, shrank back behind the rugged trunk of an oak-tree.

But they were more frightened yet when the spirits, by thousands, took their places on seats that were enormous spiders, frogs with elephants' trunks, interlaced serpents, crocodiles standing on their tails and holding a group of spirits in their jaws, serpents carrying more than thirty male and female dwarfs on their undulating bodies, and well over a hundred thousand insects larger than Goliaths, armed with swords, with lances, serrated scythes, forks with seven prongs and all other kinds of murderous weapons. They fought together with a great din, the strong eating the weak, battening on them and showing thus that Death is made of Life and that Life is made of Death.

And there came out of all this crowd of spirits, swarming, dense, confused, a noise lide to that of a low thunder and a hundred weavers' looms, fullers and locksmiths all working together.

Suddenly appeared the Spirits of the Sap, short, thick- set, having loins as big as the great tun of Heidelberg, thighs as big as hogsheads of wine, and muscles so strangely strong and powerful that one would have said that their bodies were made

of great and small eggs joined one to another, and covered with a red greasy skin, glowing like their sparse beards and their red hair; and they carried large tankards filled with a strage liquor.

When the spirits saw them come, a great tremor of joy ran through them; the trees and plants began to shake and the earth cracked open to drink.

The Spirits of the Sap poured out their wine; all things thereupon began to bud, grow green, and flower; the grass was full of insects murmuring and the sky filled with birds and butterflies; the spirits continued to pour and those who were below them received the wine as best they could; the flower-maidens opened wide their mouths or leaped upon the red cup-bearers, kissing them to have more; some joined their hands together in sign of prayer; others, in ecstasy, let it rain over them; but all, avid or thirsty, flying, standing, running or motionless, sought to have the wine, and became more intensly alive with each drop they could get. And there were no elders there; but all, ugly or fair, were full of vernal strength and quick youth.

And they laughed, cried out, sang, as they pursued each other on the trees like the sqirrels, in the air like the birds, each male seeking his female and falling to the holy work of nature under God's sky.

And the Spirits of the Sap carried a great cup of their wine to the King and Queen. And the King and Queen drank of it and embraced each other.

Then the King, holding the Queen close to him, cast upon the trees, the flowers, the spirits, the dregs of his cup, and cried out:

KING: **Glory to Life! Glory to the Free Air! Glory to Strength!**

ALL: **Glory to Nature! Glory to Strength!**

NARRATOR: **And Ulenspiegl took Nele in his arms. So enlaced, a dance began; a swirling dance like the leaves brought together by a whirlwind, where all was in movement—trees, plants, insects, butterflies, heaven and earth, King and Queen, flower-maidens, emperors of mines, water-spirits, hunchback dwarfs, princes and stones, men of the woods, lantern-bearers, protecting-spirits of the stars, and the hundred thousand horrific insects, intermingling their lances, their serrated scythes, their seven-pronged forks; a frenzied dance that swayed about in space and quite filled it, a dance in which the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the wind, and all the clouds took part.**

And the oak-tree, to which Ulenspiegl and Nele were holding on, rolled into the vortex.

ULENSPIEGL *(to Nele):* **Dear one, we are about to die.**

NARRATOR: **A spirit heard them and saw that they were mortal.**

SPIRIT: **Humans! There are humans in the place!**

NARRATOR: **And he tore them from the tree and threw them into the crowd.**

And Ulenspiegl and Nele fell limply on the backs of the spirits, who sent them bouncing from one back to another.

SPIRITS: **Greetings, humans! Welcome, earth-worms! Who wants the little boy or the little girl? They have come to visit us, the poor things!**

ULENSPIEGL AND NELE *(bouncing from one back to another):* **Pardon.**

NARRATOR: **But the spirits heard them not, and they both continued to fly throught the air, feet up, heads down, turning like feathers in a winter wind.**

SPIRITS: **Glory to the little man and the little woman who dance as we do!**

NARRATOR: **The flower-maidens, wishing to seperate Nele from Ulenspiegl, struck at her and would have killed her if the King of Spring, stopping the dance with a sign, had not called out:**

KING: **Bring these two lice before me!**

NARRATOR: **And they were seperated one from the other; and each flower-maiden, in trying to tear Ulenspiegl away from her rivals, asked:**

FLOWER-MAIDENS: **Tyl, would you not die for me?**

ULENSPIEGL: **I will do so soon.**

NARRATOR: **And the dwarf spirits of the woods, who were carrying Nele, said:**

SPIRITS OF THE WOODS: **Why are you not as we are, so that we might take you?**

NELE: **Have patience.**

NARRATOR: **So they were brought before the throne of the King; and they trembled sorely, when they saw his golden axe and his iron crown.**

KING: **What have you come to do here, poor things?**

(They make no answer.)

KING: **I know you, witch's bud; and you also, offspring of the charcoal-burner. But having, by the strength of witchcraft, penetrated this laboratory of Nature, why have you now your beaks closed, like capons stuffed with crumbs?**

NARRATOR: **Nele trembled as she looked on the terrible devil; but Ulenspiegl, recovering his manly self-possession, answered:**

ULENSPIEGL: **The ashes of Clæs beat upon my heart, Divine Highness. Death goes through Flanders mowing down, in the name of the Pope, the strongest men and the dearest women; the privileges of the country are broken, its charter wiped out; famine gnaws at her; the weavers and the drapers abandon her and go to foreign parts, seeking freedom to work. She will soon die if someone does not help her. Your Highness, I am but a poor little fellow, born into the world like anyone**

else, having lived as I could, imperfect, limited, ignorant, not virtuous, and neither chaste nor worthy of any human or divine mercy. Soetkin died, following her torture and as a result of her grief, but Clæs burned in a terrible fire, and I would avenge them, and did so once; I would also like to see the poor soil, where their bones are laid, more happy; and I asked God for the death of the persecutors, but he heard me not. Weary of making complaint, I invoked you by the power of a spell of Katheline, and we have come to kneel at your feet, I and my trembling companion, to ask you, Divine Highness, to save this poor land.

KING AND QUEEN: **By war and by fire,**
By death and by sword,
Seek the Seven.

In death and in blood,
In ruins and in tears,
Find the Seven.

Ugly, cruel, mean, deformed,
Real plagues for this poor earth,
Burn the Seven.

Await, and hear, and see,
Say, wretch, are you not glad?
Find the Seven.

SPIRITS: **In death and in blood,**
In ruins and in tears,
Find the Seven.

Await, and hear, and see,
Say, wretch, are you not glad?
Find the Seven.

ULENSPIEGL: **But, Highnesses, and you, spirits, I understand naught of your language. You are mocking me, no doubt.**

THE KING, QUEEN, AND SPIRITS *(without listening to him)*:

When the North
Shall kiss the West,
Then shall ruin end,
Find the Seven,
The Girdle find!

NARRATOR: **And this with such a great ensemble and such a fearful strength of sonoroty that the earth trembled and the heavens shook. And the birds whistling, the owls hooting, the sparrows twittering with fear, and the sea-eagles complaining, all fluttered about in dismay. And the beasts of the earth—lions, serpents, bears, stags, bucks, wolves, dogs and cats—roared, hissed, growled, howled, barked and mewed terribly.**

SPIRITS:

Await, and hear, and see,
Love the Seven
The Girdle love.

NARRATOR: **And the cocks crowed, and all the spirits vanished, save one mean emperor of mines, who, taking**

Ulenspiegl and Nele each by an arm, brutally hurled them into the void.

They found themselves lying close to one another as though for sleep, and they shivered in the cool morning breeze.

And Ulenspiegl looked upon the sweet body of Nele, made golden by the rising sun.

A
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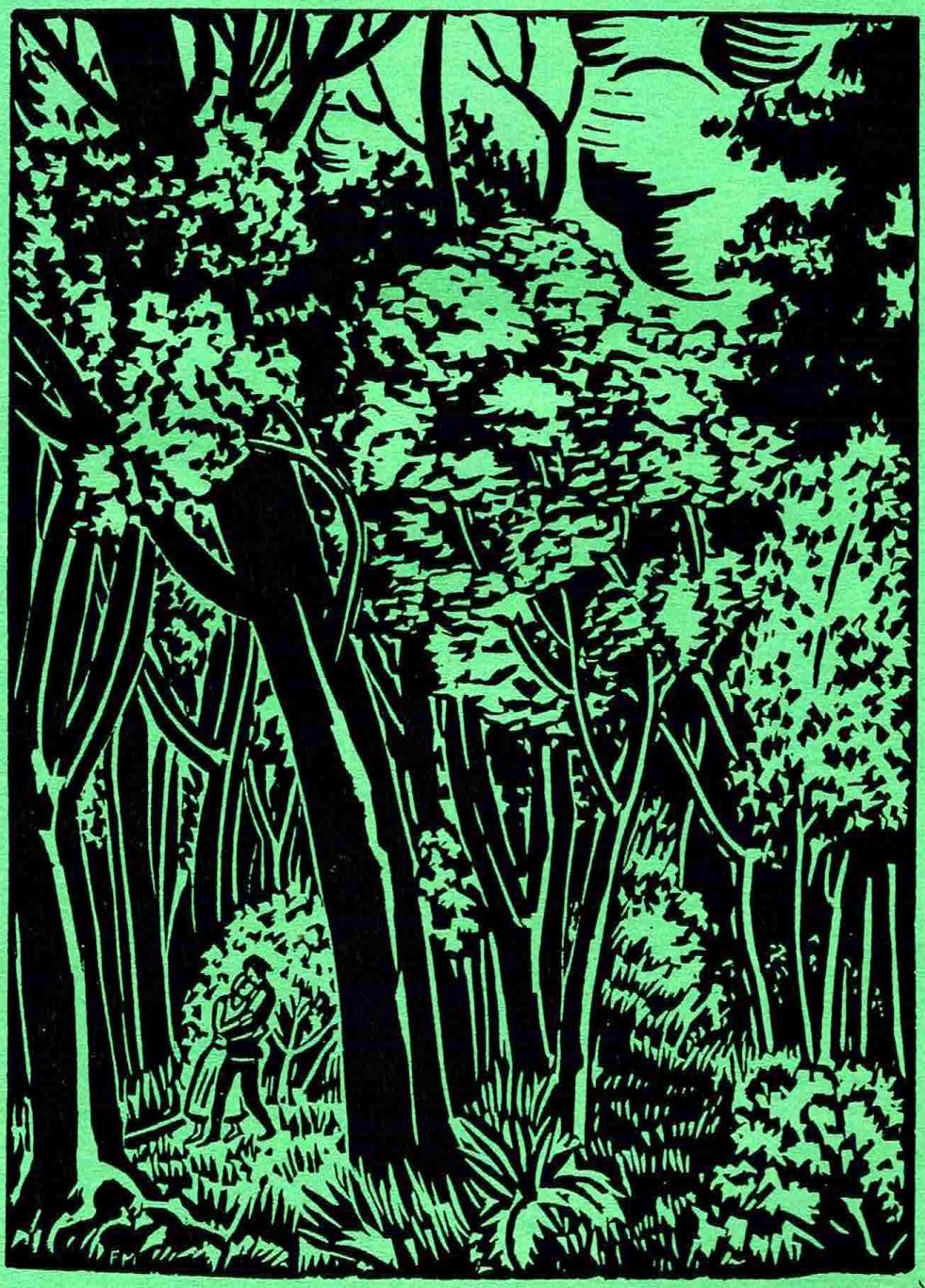
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